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usually has a separate hut for its girls, to which, we were told, their lovers come secretly by night.

Nyakyusa informants connected the existence of girls' houses with the marriage age. In Ngonde the marriage age of girls is much higher than it is among the Nyakyusa, partly because there are many more Christians (45 per cent as against 16 per cent) who do not allow polygyny, partly because even the girls from pagan families in Ngonde dislike marrying a polygynist, and partly because a much higher percentage of young men are away at work, than from Nyakyusa country. Formerly, they said, the marriage age was higher among the Nyakyusa also, and then the Nyakyusa had *isaka*. It is certain that among the Nyakyusa betrothal of a girl has long taken place before puberty, for the husband plays an essential part in the puberty ritual, and there were always some girls who were betrothed when quite tiny; but the evidence is fairly clear that the average age of betrothal among the pagans has been going down. The Nyakyusa view is that no man in his senses, who is able to marry, will engage a little girl of eight if he can find one approaching puberty; and it is the scarcity of wives that makes men 'marry' little girls. It is also clear that the number of cattle in the country, and their rate of circulation, has increased during the last two decades, so there are 'too many cattle chasing too few brides' with the result that the marriage age of girls has fallen, and the number of cattle given at marriage has increased.

Once she is betrothed, a girl's 'husband' has exclusive sexual rights over her, and she cannot entertain lovers in the *isaka*. The only two occasions on which she may flirt and have external relations with a man other than her husband, are during an initiation ceremony, when the girls of the village who have not yet reached puberty sleep with their fellow who is being initiated, and there entertain young men, and when she accompanies a bride to her husband's house. A bridegroom is expected to have external relations with his wife's two friends, as well as with his wife, on the night they bring her to his house. Love-making at the initiation-marriage ritual is held to be 'part of the ritual' and a means of sex education, and a husband can make no complaint about his 'wife' receiving lovers then, provided that penetration does not take place.

Homosexual practices are said to be very common in the boys'

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villages—they begin among boys of ten to fourteen herding cows, and continue among young men until marriage, but they are said never to continue after that, and are regarded simply as a substitute for heterosexual pleasure. 'A man never dreams of making love to another man'—only of making love to a woman. If a boy's own father, or a village father, finds a son with another youth he will beat him, but provided both parties were willing, there is no court case, and the older men treat the practice tolerantly as a manifestation of adolescence. To force a fellow to have homosexual intercourse against his will is a serious offence, comparable to witchcraft (*vide* Document, p. 196). Lesbian practices are said also to exist, but we have no certain evidence of this: if they do occur it is much more likely to be among the older wives of chiefs and other polygynists than among the girls, who have so much attention from young men.'

It is in conversation and play with village contemporaries that some knowledge of sex is acquired. Girls learn about sex from their immediate seniors, and they get some sex experience, along with formal instruction on morals, at the puberty rituals of their seniors in the age-village and at their own initiation. Boys learn from the conversation of their older fellows at night, in the boys' village. Any suggestion that sex education should be given by parents or middle-aged teachers shocks the Nyakyusa profoundly, for they hold that discussion of sex is totally incompatible with the respect due from children to parents. The taboo on sex talk between members of different generations appears to be absolute among men, but is less emphasized among women, for formal instruction on morals is given to a girl by her mother's fellows during the initiation ritual, and a young wife of her father, or of her father's neighbour, may whisper advice on sex matters even although she is classed as a 'mother'.

As we have already indicated, there are profound differences between pagans and Christians in their sex code. The Christian dogma that sex relations should only take place between adult married persons excludes the freedom of girls to have external sex relations before betrothal, or in the 'bride's' hut; it excludes girls visiting their betrothed husbands before puberty; and it excludes homosexuality, which is regarded as a mortal sin. Segregation of successive generations is not a part of the Christian tradition, hence the modifications in the rules of avoid-

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inheriting their stepmothers. Where circumcision is practised a grown woman scorns sex relations with an uncircumcised boy, therefore uncircumcised youths are not potential lovers of their fathers' junior wives; but with the Nyakyusa there is no ceremony to mark the sexual maturity of a male, and adolescent youths are acceptable to young married women of their own age. And not only does the wide difference in the age of men and girls at first marriage allow of a high degree of polygyny, but the very early bethrothal of girls (over whom their future husbands have exclusive sexual rights except during the initiation ritual) means that there are very few girls available to the unmarried men. The institution of girls' huts (*isaka*) has disappeared among the Nyakyusa owing to the lack of nubile girls who are not already betrothed, and the period of seclusion at initiation (when betrothed girls are available to men other than their husbands) is short. The contrast with Nguni society, in which girls do not marry until sixteen to twenty-two, and have several years of great sex freedom before marriage[1] is marked. We suggest that it is because unmarried girls are so scarce and lusty bachelors so many, that the seduction of the wives of polygynists is frequent, and homosexual practices are general.[2] Nyakyusa insist that formerly seduction was rare,[3] and possibly the impulse towards it was indeed less strong when girls married rather later and *isaka* existed (*vide supra*, p. 87).

Lastly, the Nyakyusa permit the inheritance of a father's widows by his sons, a practice regarded as improper by certain other peoples (e.g. the Pondo[4]) who practise the levirate. A son is required to treat all his father's wives as 'mothers' while his father and father's full brothers are alive, and intercourse with a father's wife is treated as a heinous offence necessitating special purification; but after the death of the father and his full brothers these same women become wives of their former 'sons'—with the limitation that a man cannot inherit his own mother or her kins-

[1] Hunter, op. cit., pp. 180-4; M. Kohler, *Marriage Customs in Southern Natal*, pp. 10-22; H. Kuper, *An African Aristocracy*, pp. 133-6.

[2] H. H. Johnston, *British Central Africa*, p. 408 (footnote), hints that similar practices exist among the Nyasaland Tonga and elsewhere *before* adolescence only. The Nyakyusa certainly continue after puberty.

[3] MacKenzie, op. cit., p. 63, states that the acknowledged child of an adulterous union was openly put to death.

[4] Hunter, op. cit., p. 611.

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7. HOMOSEXUALITY

X (an exceptionally reliable informant)

838 'When a boy sleeps with his friend they sleep together; it is not forbidden. Everyone thinks it all right. Sometimes when boys sleep together each may have an emission on the other (*bitundanila*). If they are great friends there is no wrong done. If a boy has an emission on his friend in his sleep without the friend knowing there is no case. Boys sometimes agree to dance together (*ukukina*) and work their evil together and that also is no wrong. But they fear very much to dance thus because their parents will be angry, saying: "You are learning adultery; you will be fools when you grow up." Boys do this when they are out herding; then they begin to dance together and to have intercourse together. But there is something which is a great wrong—if one [184] boy, perhaps out herding or perhaps in the boys' village at night, catches hold of his fellow and has an emission on him (*nukutundila*) then it is a great case involving a fine. One who has been forced by his fellow will tell his parents and they will take him to the village headman to inform the headman. It is a great case and the boy who forced his fellow pays a bull or perhaps a cow. They say that to force [154] a fellow thus is witchcraft (*bo buloti*); he is not a woman. But when they have agreed and dance together, then even if people find them they say it is adolescence (*bukulilo*), all children are like that. And they say that sleeping together and dancing is also adolescence.

'This custom is mostly among children, it is forbidden for men to sleep together. They do not fear lest when they have soiled a friend they will pay; no, they fear to be shamed. Not many cases of grown men having intercourse together come to light, but only of boys together or of a man and a boy. Some, during intercourse, work in the mouth of their friend, and have an orgasm; those do very, very great wrong. Some have intercourse in the anus, some between the legs—there are many who practise this latter form and this is what boys mostly do. That of the mouth people do very rarely when they dance together, because one who does it may have a great case against him.

'A person never dreams of making love to another man but only when two youths sleep together on a mat, then something evil may take place between them, at night during sleep. Perhaps when one has dreamed that he is having intercourse with a woman but he has been caught and not finished, he soils his friend.

'And when out herding, some of the older boys do evil with the

[p. 196]

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young ones, the older ones persuade the little ones to lie down with them and to do that which is forbidden with them between the legs. Sometimes two older boys who are friends do it together, one gets on top of his fellow, then he gets off and the other mounts. All this which they do together or with a junior is a small wrong. When their parents find them they reprove them and tell them it is forbidden, they beat them a little. But when a little boy is caught hold of by an older boy against his will, and he tells that so and so caught him and had intercourse (*ukulagwa*) with him then the older boy will be fined, perhaps a bull.

'It is altogether forbidden to do evil to a fellow by night. The boy who has been so treated will be angry and run off to the court, and he who did evil to him will be fined. He will pay one cow, because they say it is forbidden to do evil to your fellow by night. There are some who, when they have dreamed at night of a woman, wake up and catch hold of a friend, and have intercourse with him.'

A and J.

A and J agreed that homosexuality occurred frequently in boys' villages. 'A boy has intercourse with his fellow, but a grown man? No, never, we've never heard of it. They always want women; only when a man cannot get a woman he does this, only in youth. A few men do not marry but they are half-wits who have no kind of intercourse at all.

'And there is one famous case in the hills of a man who, though not mad, dresses as a woman; but he has no intercourse either with men or women.'

A case was also quoted of a doctor in Tukuyu who 'is a woman; she has borne children, now her body has grown the sexual organs of a man and her feelings have changed also; but she keeps it very secret, she is spoken of as a woman.'

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16. THINGS ASSOCIATED WITH WITCHCRAFT

Mwaisumo (clerk).

1. 'Bestiality. This is associated with witchcraft (*sya bu lon*) because, it is said, witches eat the flesh of human beings which an ordinary person does not eat—ordinary people all avoid human flesh. One who has intercourse with an animal, a thing which an ordinary person does not do but avoids, is like one who eats human flesh.' 754 839

2. 'Intercourse with a very young girl. This is associated with witchcraft because no one desires it, only this person' (i.e. such a desire is abnormal).

3. 'Intercourse with a very old woman. This is associated with witchcraft because no one desires old women.'

4. 'Intercourse between a grown man and a boy. This is associated with witchcraft because grown men always desire women.' 754 838

In reply to a question: 'No, it never happens that two grown men lie together, but youths do. That is not associated with witchcraft; that is adolescence.'

5. 'If a woman takes something very dirty (such as excrement) and puts it on her husband's bed, or in his food, because she hates him, that is associated with witchcraft because it is very, very dirty. No one (normal) does such a thing.' 754

In reply to a question: 'No, if children play with excrement, that is not associated with witchcraft.'

6. 'In Selya we do not eat the meat of a leopard though in Kukwe country they do. If a Selya man tastes it people say: "How can he eat leopard meat which no one eats? It's like witchcraft." Leopard meat is forbidden because leopards kill and eat people. 754 262

'So with the meat of a dog or rat or monkey. A dog is not eaten because it's our friend—a person—and a monkey is a person.'

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When we have finished the
ritual I come together with my wife again, but if our child is unmarried it is taboo to procreate a child, we practise *coitus interruptus*, the semen falls on the mat. . . . This is until the girl goes to her husband, until she is married. If my wife wears a bark-cloth I say to her during our daughter's puberty ritual: 'Arrange your bark-cloth carefully lest I, the man, desire you, I shall catch hold of you and we will cause the shade to make our child barren.' When she has gone to her husband we say our shade has finished, he has gone away in the water. Our child has gone to another shade. Yes, she also has intercourse with her husband at his home, but that does not matter, I have intercourse with my wife.

He was emphatic that the parents begin full intercourse as soon as the girl goes to her husband, it is not necessary to wait for her to become pregnant.

QUESTION: What do the spirits do in intercourse?

MWASALEMBA: The shade causes my penis to stand up and says: 'Go to the woman, there.' And also the woman's shade says: 'Your husband comes into you.' It is the shades which create desire, then we have intercourse, the shades meet together, hers—the woman's—and mine. If I do not go to my wife the shade says: 'Why, what's wrong with my place? Are there thorns? Why do you not enter?' They brood over (*bikobatela*) us both, both me and my wife.

QUESTION: What do they want?

MWASALEMBA: They want to create a child.

QUESTION: Why then do men desire masturbation and sodomy? [At first when I asked this he said: 'No, the shade is a woman,' but then he corrected himself].

MWASALEMBA: It is the shade which creates this desire, we have it within. A youth masturbates, the semen falls on the ground—perhaps two youths; it's also the shade. And a woman also masturbates. . .

QUESTION: You perform the rituals for many reasons?

MWASALEMBA: Yes, if we do not perform the rituals the shade broods on us and we do not bear children. Perhaps he broods on the crops, and they do not grow well but poorly, perhaps we run mad.

On another occasion Mwasalemba said:

The shade is in the heart. It is the shade which desires to go to a woman, which causes us men to have erections and excites desire in women. If you have not got the shade you are impotent, you do not go to women. We say: 'The shade has brooded over this man, why do they not rouse him to go to women?' He just looks at women. Then the shade rouses up in the belly and says: 'Ha!' It rouses up and the man has intercourse with a woman. If it has brooded over him, it does not

8:Wilson E-5 (1934-1936)1936 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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boys tell all sorts of stories, especially about women, they discuss love-making and women, and tell tales of their own conquests. The younger ones listen to these things and that is all right in the boys' village, that is how we learn. But we compare in our minds and think that if a boy stays at home it is as if he listened to all this from his parents, and people always do talk lewdly at night; and that is very bad, that is foolishness.—But in the boys' village it is good for the young ones to listen, that is how children grow up."

On another occasion when I told this same man that in Europe many people thought it a good thing for boys to get sexual instruction from their parents and teachers he was shocked: "But I think it is impossible" he protested "for parents to go into detail with their children; there is too much shame on both sides. And if they did, it would damage the children's respect for them."

There is thus a correlation in this society between the age-village system at its genesis and the belief that a boy's dawning interest in sex must be informed, not by his parents, but by friends only a little older than himself.

Few men marry before twenty-five years of age, but affairs with girls begin before puberty. All affairs are related in detail to friends in the age-village, and the younger ones learn by listening; and they also learn when the older boys send them as messengers to the girls of their fancy.

Besides the more serious love affairs which are carried on in secret, groups of boys from the same age-village commonly flirt with any girls they meet on the way, and it is then that the incest taboos are learnt. If one of the boys is known to be related to one of the girls, either through a common grandfather or great-grandfather, his companions send him away: "Don't you see your sister is here? You cannot come!"

Contrary to a general belief about "primitive" societies, homosexual intercourse is common in the boys' villages, between close friends, but there is no real perversion; homosexuality is said to be always *faute de mieux*. The older men in discussion dismiss it with the tolerant word "adolescence," it is never continued after marriage, and all except the feeble-minded get married sooner or later.

But life in a boys' village also gives its members much information and wisdom unconnected with sex. There, as we have seen, boys perfect their skill in building, and there also they learn to argue and express themselves with adult fluency. It is characteristic of the Nyakyusa legal

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
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like most of the leaders of Zionist Churches in the south.[1] 797x

It is noticeable that the two 'independent' Churches have a more elaborate form of service than the Church from which their leaders have sprung, and Ngemela habitually wears conspicuous vestments. There is, of course, great variation between different denominations in the emphasis placed on ritual, some Protestants abjuring it and turning their very insistence on starkness and simplicity into a ritual in itself—a taboo. There seems to be a clear tendency in Southern Africa for 'independent' Churches to express themselves more and more in ritual and less in dogma. In this way they reduce the gap between themselves and the pagans, for the pagan religion is expressed almostly exclusively in ritual, whereas Christianity is expressed in creeds and confessions as well as in the rituals of the Church. 795x 779 [796]

(e) THE CONTRAST BETWEEN PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN

There are certain common elements in the rituals celebrated by pagans and Christians: some of the occasions are the same, and in the conceptions of sacrifice, of death and rebirth, of confession and cleansing, there are similarities; but there are also profound differences. The conception of life, immortality, replaces the preoccupation with fertility, for though most Nyakyusa Christians, like the pagans, regard celibacy as evidence of physical abnormality, and the conventional desire of a woman is to have six children—a quiverful in Nyakyusa eyes—yet fertility is no longer the end of all being, sought in every ritual. There are profound differences, too, in the values expressed in the rituals regarding sex relations, the range of moral obligations, and social change. In pagan thought polygyny is good—a man should have many children. Child marriage is defended on the ground that a girl 'gets accustomed to her husband' if she goes to him early, and homosexual relations between youths and young men are tolerated since they have no wives and *cannot* marry if the older men are polygynists. What is upheld is the chastity of women, and a total separation of the sex activities of members of successive generations, expressed in the taboos limiting familiarity between mother and son, father and nubile daughter, father-in-law and daughter-law. In Christian thought it is the 'pure in heart' who 'see God' and this is interpreted by the mission Churches to imply monogamy. Only in the 'independent' African Churches is it asserted 797x 795x [842] [589] [595] [584] [838] [836] [561] [183] [595]

[1] The emphasis on healing, so common in the south, is absent.